Dean Russell

EQUALITY AND SECURITY

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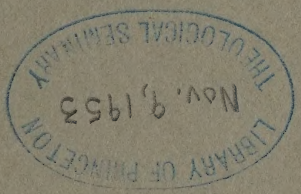

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Equality and Security

DEAN RUSSELL

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dean Russell, author of *The TVA Idea* and *Wards of the Government,* and translator of Bastiat's *The Law,* is a member of the Foundation staff.

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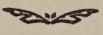
EQUALITY AND SECURITY



IT WAS JUNE of 1934 when I left the orphanage where I was reared — the Odd Fellows' Home in Lynchburg, Virginia. In July of 1951, I was invited to return as the speaker at a Home-Coming Day celebration the following September.

As I considered whether or not to accept the invitation, my thoughts wandered back to the place where I had lived until I was eighteen. My memories of milking the cows on cold mornings when I wanted to stay in bed were not so pleasant. But my memories of the smell of fresh earth as it was turned by the plow — and of walking barefooted in the furrow — were most pleasant. There was threshing time with its heat and dirt and dust, but there were also baseball and chapel and the library.

That wonderful library! I wondered if my Horatio Alger favorites were still there: *Do and Dare, Work and Win, Ragged Dick, Strive and Succeed,* and many others of the same general nature. Those are the once-popular novels for children that tell of an America where the poor boy from the other side of the railroad tracks could become the president of the bank, where the penniless

orphan could become a great scientist, where there was no legal nor traditional caste system to hold a person back, and things like that.

As those memories came flooding back, I decided to accept the invitation to return to my boyhood home as a speaker. I also decided that my speech would be mostly a discussion with the children about the perplexing problems of economic equality and material security in a world where most people have come to demand them as a birthright rather than as a reward for hard work and intelligent thinking.

In writing the formal part of my talk, I began with an ardent defense of the American form of representative government. And, unashamedly, I mentioned God and the traditional American way of life in the same paragraph. I did this because I have a deep faith in what both of them mean and represent.

But in writing about these things, I kept firmly in mind a few basic assumptions that seem to me perfectly obvious: No two persons are equal in ability or ambition; nor should they expect equality in their resulting material possessions. Security is mental and spiritual, even more than material. True and lasting security is to be found only in the privilege of each person to be responsible for the welfare of himself and of those who

are logically dependent upon him. The primary purpose of government is to prevent any person from using force to impose his will or viewpoint upon any other person, thus leaving all persons free to seek and retain whatever security, possessions, and happiness they desire and are able to earn. Every person has a moral responsibility to voluntarily help his less fortunate neighbor who is in need.

Compulsory Equality

But how was I to give a convincing explanation of the realistic but now-unpopular concept of inequality in an admittedly insecure world to a group of boys and girls ranging in age from six to eighteen? Then I thought of an approach that might help them to understand it. I remembered from my own experience that children in orphanages are generally reared under a system of absolute equality. They have equal clothes, equal food, equal housing, equal medical care, equal security, equal education, equal work, equal play, and all other such equalities. In fact, they already have, on a temporary basis, what many Americans demand from the government as rights for themselves and their children on a permanent basis.

When I lived under that system as a child, I distinctly remember that I didn't consider

it at all desirable as a permanent arrangement. And I am happy to report a definite trend toward more individualism — less equality and more recognition of personal effort — in most private orphanages and similar non-governmental institutions today.

When I entered into another form of forced equality and regimented security during my five years in the Army during World War II, I found no new evidence to convince me of their desirability. Quite the contrary! I was exceedingly happy to return to a realistic life of inequality and responsibility for my own decisions and welfare.

And so it is with most children in orphanages. While we are usually sincerely grateful to the people who have voluntarily provided us with a home while we are unable to care for ourselves, most of us look forward to the birthday that ends our guaranteed security; that terminates our unrealistic status of equality; that begins our complete responsibility for our own decisions — for better or for worse.

Two Types of Education

IT CAN be stated, though, that children in orphanages may have one advantage — probably the only one — over children who are reared in normal homes where the parents so often use their votes to elect representa-

tives who promise them government-guaranteed equality and security. Children in most orphanages receive a realistic education in the direct connection between working and having. For example, in my orphanage, we knew that the cows had to be milked before we could have milk to drink. Before we could eat potatoes, we actually had to prepare the land, plant the seed potatoes, cultivate them, and harvest them. And we were early encouraged to save some of our few pennies for a future "capital investment," such as a college education.

Possibly that concept is indeed old fashioned. At any rate, more and more American parents are teaching their children that the government should guarantee them — from the cradle to the grave — adequate housing, free education, equal medical care, an acceptable job with adequate wages, old age benefits, subsidies, protection against competition and reality, and many other so-called progressive social measures by government. Nevertheless, I believe that all children would have a better chance of a successful adulthood if their parents — each in his own way — would teach them the vital and inescapable lesson that this "something for nothing" philosophy is false. For if any person — whether a child of nine, an adult of thirty, or an older person of sixty-five — can get what he wants without working for it,

the evidence seems overwhelming that he won't do much work. And a person with that training and philosophy naturally believes he is quite justified in voting for the political candidate who promises him the greatest amount of government-guaranteed security — including protection against any adverse results of his own freedom of choice.

A Philosophy of Government

My experience has been that if one is so bold as to question that modern philosophy of government, he will frequently receive some such answer as this: "It is my patriotic duty to vote for the candidate who has the interests of the people most at heart. This is a government *for* the people. Its officials are my servants; they should do things *for* me and for all the other people who need help."

Those people honestly seem to believe that the phrase "government as servant" means that government should give them material benefits — directly or through special laws. They don't seem to realize that when the servant gains the power to support the master — and when the master becomes dependent upon the servant — the former relationship becomes completely reversed. Nor do they seem to realize that when democracy becomes merely a device whereby the people

petition government for material benefits, the right to vote has then degenerated into a mockery and a fraud and a generator of class warfare between the more successful and the less successful.

Persons and Groups

Those were the ideas I wished to discuss with the children who now lived in the orphanage that once was my home. Above all, I wanted to share with them my experience and conviction that most persons in their relationships with each other are almost always honest and charitable. If it were the other way around, we would long ago have destroyed ourselves!

It is mainly when persons combine into mobs and other militant pressure groups that tolerance and an instinctive respect for others are lost in an illogical and mad attempt to force peaceful individuals and minorities to conform to the viewpoints and prejudices of the herd. When this happens, love and charity and respect for one's fellow-man receive a mortal blow.

But, fortunately, most of our everyday relationships with each other are still on a purely individual and voluntary basis — ministers and doctors and lawyers serve persons who are voluntary parishioners and patients and clients, the grocer voluntarily

sells his produce to the willing purchaser, most employees still voluntarily work for willing employers at a rate of pay acceptable to each, bankers still prefer to lend money to a person at a mutually acceptable rate of interest, most neighbors still live in peace with each other without a policeman to patrol the property lines, and so on and so on.

As long as these transactions and relationships are left to the people themselves, there is a maximum of peace and progress. In a free society, it is only rarely that government — the organized police force — has to restrain some antisocial person from imposing his will upon others. But when various peaceful persons themselves join groups to force others — legally or illegally — to conform to their ideas and desires, peace is immediately destroyed and civilization is imperiled. This is as true between groups within a nation as it is between nations. The only difference is in the size and degree of conflict.

Helping One's Neighbor

IT HAS BEEN my observation and experience everywhere I have lived that almost everyone is willing to help his neighbor who is truly in need — if the receiver respects the giver's right to do it voluntarily and in his own way. So far as I can now recall, no person has ever refused any sincere and logical request of

mine for help, whether my need was medical, legal, spiritual, financial, educational, or whatever. In fact, so many hundreds of persons have given me assistance at various times and in various ways that I cannot now possibly recall all their names!

This principle of helping one's neighbor does not, of course, necessarily hold true if the neighbor is one who claims that the world owes him a living. The vicious and greedy people who are always advancing their "rights" to a share of other people's money are to be ignored if possible. If necessary, they should be opposed as a simple matter of self-defense.

There is another group of persons who also claim "rights" to your property, but for a different reason: They are sincere and charitable persons who truly want to help their less fortunate fellow-men; but they want to perform their charitable acts on a large scale with other people's money, instead of on the basis of their own individual capabilities and with their own money! Their sincere but misguided idea of helping people is to pass a law to force everyone to contribute to government which, in turn, will distribute the money "to those who need it most." This concept is sometimes called the "service state" or "welfare government." The people who hold this concept are especially dangerous because their intentions are so good. The

purity of their motives tends to obscure the ultimate evilness of their acts.

Freedom Rejected

WHETHER THEY are aware of it or not, these well-intentioned people have lost their faith in free men. Obviously they no longer believe that freedom will work — otherwise they would not restrict or abolish it by law in so many areas of human activity. They fear that, in a free society, a great number of people would starve or, at least, remain ill housed, ill clothed, and ill fed. Since they truly don't want this to happen, they naturally reject the voluntary society in which they have lost faith, and turn for help to the force that is government. And as they advocate laws to force all of us to conform to their own concepts of human behavior, they attempt to justify their actions by claiming that compulsion by government is the only path to economic security for most people in many essential areas of life; that true liberty is to be secured only through force; that most people will not do the right thing if they have freedom of choice in the matter; that charity should be public and impersonal instead of private and personal, and that it shouldn't be called charity anyway. They will tell you that the main purpose of government is to guarantee equality and se-

curity for all, and that our aspirations and needs can be settled better by law than by love.

The Return Home

As I began to write my thoughts on these controversial ideas, I visualized the 130 or so boys and girls who would be sitting so stiffly and uncomfortably before me in the auditorium of my orphanage. I smiled as I remembered the cleaning and scrubbing and coaching that had always preceded such an occasion when I was living there.

I worked especially hard on this particular speech. I wanted to offer something of value that would be within the reach of all — something of true importance that could be appreciated and shared by the children, the visiting Odd Fellows and their sister Rebekahs, and the now-grown men and women who, like me, would be returning to our former home for this reunion.

The day arrived. I was there with happiness in my heart and my notes in my pocket. But I was bitterly disappointed.

I wanted to see again the room in which I had lived and dreamed. I could not — the building was closed and locked. Other buildings had also been closed — including the library that I had especially wanted to visit again. Most of the fields where we once la-

bored so hard to plant and reap were unused and overgrown with weeds and bushes. Where I had remembered a lively activity of life and work and hope, there was now the appearance of decay.

The Reason

THERE WAS, of course, a reason for this. The buildings were closed and the land was unused because there were only 26 children in the Home! But what is the reason, I asked, for this decrease from 130 to 26? Are there now fewer orphans? Do homeless children now need less help than formerly?

No, neither of these was the reason. It seems that government has now almost completely taken over the responsibility for child welfare. It is a combination of local, state, and federal governments. There is the appearance of local administration, but the money comes from both the state and federal governments. The state governments have the direct control, but they must conform to the various "suggestions" from the federal government if they expect to continue to receive federal funds.

Widowed mothers may now receive money from government if they keep their children at home. The government may also pay a yearly bonus to unwed mothers for every child produced. And children who have lost

both parents — or, for that matter, children with living parents — may now be "warded out" by government to relatives and non-relatives who will maintain a home according to government specifications in return for government money. In each instance, the welfare workers have the legal right to inspect the children and mothers and foster parents. The government sees to it that the children are housed and clothed and fed and educated according to government standards. The government, under the various state laws, even has the legal right to enter the home and to take the children from the parents or foster parents if the children are not being reared in a manner acceptable to the government authorities.

The Result

This movement began in some of our states as long ago as 1911. But it received its real impetus when the federal government moved in during the 1930's with its aid to dependent children. The end result of this solution to an admitted problem can be visualized by this specific example from a "question and answer" column by Dorothy Dix:

> *Question:* "I asked the state to board my children out two years ago as I was ill and couldn't take care of them. Now we are trying to

get them home, but are told we can't provide a proper living for them. They have let two of them come home, but are keeping the other three. I am heartsick about it and can't sleep nights. The welfare says they will put them out for adoption. (Mrs. G. H.)"

Answer: "Though local laws differ in this matter, I doubt very much if your children can be put out for adoption without your consent. See a lawyer to learn your rights in getting the youngsters back. If you have no money, get in touch with the Legal Aid Society in your nearest big city. You will find their address in the telephone book. Then, by scrupulous care of the two children you have with you, convince the authorities of your fitness as a mother, so they'll have no alternative but to return the other children to you."

She must convince the government of her fitness as a mother before she can have her own children! Defend, if you will, government aid to homeless and helpless and innocent children. Point out all the horrible suffering that this government money may have stopped. Condemn the admitted evilness of some parents. Proclaim the admitted effi-

ciency and compassion of highly-trained government social workers. Admit the good intentions of the advocates of government aid to dependent children. Yes, recite all of the points favorable to government-guaranteed equality and security for innocent children. Then look again at your own children — and realize the harsh fact that you may keep them only as long as your government considers you to be a fit parent according to government standards. It is true that the iron fist may as yet be gloved in thick velvet, but this does not deny the reality of the situation.

It seems to me that any law to determine the fitness of parents to be the guardians of their own children is a sure road to injustice and disaster. When government has the power to direct or control the family, the basis of our society is in danger; for the only alternative to parental responsibility is some form of compulsory communal control. Human dignity and love cannot long survive under such a system.

Protecting Children

I CAN THINK of no reason why the government should ever step between parents and children *as such*. Children are, of course, persons. And under a government of law, they are entitled to the protection of law

like any other person, regardless of age. If a parent commits a crime against his child — such as "cruel and unusual punishment" — he should be restrained by law in exactly the same manner as if he had done the injury to any other person.

If parents are criminals, put them in jail — not as parents but as persons. If parents are criminally insane, confine them. Only when both parents are dead or confined should any other person or group of persons consider the problem of what to do with their dependent children.

If no one has the legal responsibility for such destitute children — or if those who have it refuse to fulfill their legal and moral obligations — then the children may logically and justly be left with some person or group of persons who choose to recognize their moral responsibility to care for abandoned and helpless children. And if there are no persons who will accept such moral responsibility — individually or by voluntary group action through their churches and other charitable organizations — then God has been rejected, and it is pointless to haggle over the fate of a few children when all humanity is lost.

No person has any moral right whatsoever to interfere between parents and children *as such,* nor to determine the parents' right to have children and to rear them according to

their own beliefs and convictions. The person who claims otherwise is saying, in effect, that his is the only standard by which other persons shall live and rear their children. It is not at all surprising to find that a few persons with that belief carry it to its logical conclusion by advocating that the state shall be empowered to sterilize persons who do not measure up to some arbitrary standard that some persons wish to impose upon other persons.

Contemplation

After I had learned the reason for the present circumstances of my former home, I wandered away by myself into the grove of magnificent oak trees that I remembered from my childhood. I sat on the ground and thought about the future of private charity and personal compassion, and about the speech that I was soon to make.

I did not wish to debate the merits of institutional care for children versus grants-in-aid to mothers and foster parents to help them rear the children in a home atmosphere. I wanted only to discuss whether the government should use its taxing powers to force its citizens to support *either* method.

My belief is that there is no clear-cut answer to the question of institutional care versus home care for orphans and children

from broken or incomplete homes. Probably there is need for both, with the decision to be based on the circumstances of each individual case.

On an overall basis, I believe that I received sound training and excellent care in my orphanage. And most of my fellow-orphans to whom I have talked have told me they feel the same way.

Of course, none of us considers an orphanage a perfect place to live. And, of course, we who were reared in the Home cannot know for sure that we were better off there than we would have been with relatives or foster parents. We have no true comparison. Nor can any other person say with complete assurance that a child will have a better chance in a broken or incomplete or foster home than in an institution with other children of like circumstances. *That is why I feel so strongly that no law should be passed one way or the other.*

The True Test

THE PROBLEM is how best to help destitute children from incomplete homes. I may decide that the small amount of money I have available for this purpose will do the greatest amount of good if I give it to an institution for the care of children. Other people may think differently than I do in this respect.

They may prefer to give their money to help support children in foster homes. Good! Let them devote their money and time to helping their fellow-men in their own way. And let them accord me the same privilege! Let the test be on the realistic basis of what a person voluntarily does with his own money, *not on the unrealistic basis of what he is willing to vote to do with other people's money.*

It seems to me an evil and immoral thing for a person to try, in any manner, to force others to conform to his ideas of Christianity and the helping of one's neighbor in need. Why do so many people advocate laws to do it? I am convinced that no lasting good can come from such a use of force. I wonder how Jesus would have handled the story of the Good Samaritan if the good deed had been performed by an agent of Caesar who had legally taxed a proportionate amount of the necessary money from the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan! Under those circumstances, there could hardly have been a message to inspire men of good will down through the centuries.

Moral Principles

Those were the disturbing and controversial ideas that entered my mind as I sat alone shortly before I was to speak. In line with what I had been thinking, I jotted down

several thoughts on the subjects of morality and moral principles, and their relationship to the idea of helping one's fellow-men.

There were several hundred people in the audience. Ironically, the children to whom I had planned to talk were not present; they were elsewhere practicing their parts in the day's program. So my speech, instead of being offered as friendly advice to a group of orphans about to face the world on their own, was switched to a discussion with adults about some of the basic moral principles which underlie the standards they might want their own children to follow.

I began by stating my conviction that a moral principle has the same value in the area of human relationships that a physical principle has in the area of physics, or a chemical principle in the science of chemistry. For example, the moral principle summarized in the Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," is just as true and timeless as is the physical principle known as the law of gravity. Both have always been true, both are true today, and both will remain true forever — they are a part of eternal truth.

Eternal Truth Denied

All of us are aware of the workings of natural law in the fields of physics and mathematics. But few persons yet seem to under-

stand the operation of natural law in the field of human relationships. In fact, many prominent persons deny that there is any such thing as eternal truth in relationships between persons. A Justice of our present Supreme Court has stated in an official opinion: "Nothing is more certain in modern society than the principle that there are no absolutes." The statement was contained in a majority decision!

Admittedly, we don't yet know as much about moral law — natural law in the area of human relationships — as we know about natural law in science. But it seems to me that the only conclusion properly to be drawn from this fact is that we have much to learn.

We discover the existence and operation of moral laws in much the same manner that we discover the existence and operation of the laws of any other science — by experience, by observation, by trial and error, by deduction, by experimentation, and, possibly, by intuition or revelation. And since the relationships between persons are vital to society itself, the leading philosophers and students of ancient times apparently devoted considerably more time to the study of moral laws than they did to the study of physical and mathematical laws. It was only some 250 years before Christ that Euclid formulated the natural laws of geometry. But the natural laws of human relationships that are

summarized in the Ten Commandments were formulated at least 1200 years before Christ.

Ignorance Is No Excuse

MORAL AND PHYSICAL principles may, of course, be ignored. But the principles themselves continue to exist and to operate and to be completely oblivious of human desires. For example, I still remember most vividly a certain winter's day when I was fourteen years old and living in the Home. I decided to go skating. I decided that the ice would hold me. But it didn't.

My ignorance of the natural laws of physics and chemistry was no excuse; it didn't prevent the ice from breaking. Even when an innocent baby tumbles from a window, its ignorance of the law of gravity is of no help. Nor is there any use in cursing or denying the law of gravity, or in claiming that it isn't fair. There is nothing we can do about natural law — be it moral or physical or economic or whatever — except study it and conform to its mandates.

I also remember another episode that happened while I was in the Home. I stole two new sheets and sold them for a quarter. I can still recall my feeling of guilt and fear when I took the sheets from the supply room and hid them in a closet — took them late at night from the closet and hid them in the

barn — took them the next day from the barn and sold them to a poor family for two dimes and a nickel — took the money and bought seven candy bars. Yes, I can still recall it and other episodes like it. That is a part of my punishment.

You see, I had broken a natural law in the field of morality when, without the owner's consent, I took something that did not belong to me. And the consequences of breaking the moral law against stealing are just as certain as are the consequences of ignoring any other natural law. The only difference is in the form of punishment. The consequences of breaking physical or chemical laws are instantaneous and frequently dramatic. They are usually obvious to everyone because we know so much about the direct connection between the act and the result. The consequences of breaking the moral laws against coveting or stealing your neighbor's property may not be so obvious and dramatic.

For example, one of the punishments for breaking a moral law is the mere remembering of it. That lasts for varying periods of time, depending upon the circumstances of the theft and the sensitiveness of the thief. And that is what a person means when he speaks of his conscience — the guide that he must follow if he is to have any real happiness in life.

Retribution for the breaking of moral laws

— such as those summarized in the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule — may assume many other forms. Among them — and depending upon the kind or degree of immorality — may be revenge from the persons wronged, social ostracism, loss of character, bestiality, a guilt complex and various other personality complexes, the development and encouragement of greed and gluttony, parasitism or dependence, ever-increasing laziness, the destruction of one's creative ability and the failure to fully develop one's potentiality, mental ills and physical diseases brought on by vice and corruption, injury and disgrace to one's family, worry, fear, poverty, degeneracy, and, finally, whatever judgments there may be after physical death.

Judas Iscariot betrayed a trust — violated a moral law — and he felt the enormity of his guilt so much that he killed himself. A murderer or an embezzler may take his own life for the simple reason that he can no longer bear to face his family and friends nor, for that matter, even himself. Others don't go to such lengths, but their punishment is still certain in various other forms.

Do all of these undesirable things automatically happen to every person who breaks a moral law? Indeed not, or mankind would long ago have destroyed itself completely! But when I ignored the physical laws governing the results of skating on thin ice, I did

not die either. I did, however, get chilled and wet and catch a cold, and I ran the risk of death. So it is with the natural laws of morality; every violation of the moral code leaves its inevitable mark in one way or another, and repeated violations will surely lead to complete degeneration.

The Eighth Commandment

If this is true — and who will deny it? — let us examine again the moral principle, "Thou shalt not steal," and its bearing on the problem of helping our less fortunate neighbors.

Natural law decrees that no one is immune to death from accidents or from various ills of the flesh. So there will always be orphans and widowed mothers with small children. And, frequently, these unfortunate persons may need assistance. The only disagreement among persons of good will would seem to be in the appropriateness of the means used to accomplish this desirable end.

It is my belief that an attempt to accomplish a good deed by evil means is no more logical than trying to grow wheat from tare seeds. Evil begets evil, just as surely as night follows day. And I am equally sure that if I always knew the right thing to do — and always did it — good, not evil, would always be the result. Any seeming evidence to the

contrary is probably due to my ignorance of what is right, or to my incomplete knowledge of the inevitable workings of moral law, or to my inability to recognize that a result displeasing to me may still be a good result in spite of my temporary unhappiness.

But, apparently, the vast majority of the American people believes that good ends can be achieved through evil means, thus justifying the means; that it is perfectly all right to take another person's money by force, or by threat of force, if the proceeds are to be used to alleviate human suffering — provided, of course, that the taking is done with the sanction of the majority of the people.

Our Criminal Code

As INDIVIDUALS, most of us reject theft in our personal relationships. I doubt that any of us would consider it morally correct to pick his neighbor's pocket in order to help another person. And our criminal code is based on the theory of natural law that the number of persons involved in a robbery — and the use made of the loot — does not excuse anyone; the person who plans the robbery, the person who drives the get-away car, and the person who wields the gun are equally guilty. Nor is their theft justified because they decide to give some — or even all — of the money to an orphanage or to a

poor widow with small children. Our criminal law states clearly — and in complete harmony with moral law — that the good end for which the money is used does not excuse the evil means of getting the money. If this were not true, our robbers and thieves could justify their evilness by giving some of their loot to charity. In fact, many of them do attempt such justification!

Our criminal code also recognizes the natural law concept that each member of a "lynch mob" is as guilty as the person who handles the rope. But it is in this area that most people seem to become confused concerning the operation of natural law. Apparently it is the fact of the large number of people involved that causes the confusion. It is thought that if enough people believe a thing to be right, then surely it must be right!

Each of us can see the moral justice in punishing the individual robber who wields a gun. Many of us are not quite sure that all of the participants in a robbery are as guilty as the one robber among them who murders the cashier during the holdup. Most of us attach no guilt whatever to the hundreds or thousands of individuals who are in the mob that destroys or loots property, or murders. And it seems that almost everyone will deny that any possible immorality is involved when millions of people vote to have their representatives and policemen

and tax collectors take money from some people and give it to others.

And yet the same principle or natural law is violated in each case; force, or the threat of force, is used against persons to make them surrender their honestly acquired property against their wills.

Democracy

At this point, most persons will use the word "democracy" to justify this procedure. They will maintain that it is morally correct to take another person's money if the majority of the people is in favor of it.

It seems to me that legalities and moralities are here being confused. Apparently we have now drifted so far from the concept of eternal truth that we have come to believe that the way to determine "right" is to vote on it; that what is legal is automatically morally right; that what is illegal is thereby automatically morally wrong; that truth is determined by majority decision; *that might makes right.*

But legalities do not determine moralities. Might does not make right. The fact that 51 per cent of the people may vote to take other people's money and give it to poor widows with children, does indeed make that act legal. But the act itself is still thievery — the taking of a person's property without his

consent — and all the man-made laws in the world cannot change its immorality.

Robin Hood and Jesse James were common robbers, even though in our literature and movies they have been pictured as heroes because they sometimes shared their loot with the poor. Admittedly, the robber who takes my money at the point of a gun and gives part of it to a worthy charity should not be condemned any more than the people who elect an agent to do the same thing to me on some sort of a percentage basis.

No person has a moral right to satisfy his charitable instincts with money taken by force from its rightful owner. Theft is theft, and the number of persons involved — or the mechanism used to relieve a person of his money against his will — does not change that fact.

Render unto Caesar . . .

A LONG TIME AGO, Jesus Christ indicated that a person should render unto government that which properly belongs to government, and unto God that which properly belongs to God. Unfortunately — or maybe fortunately? — He did not choose to say which is which. Ever since then, much as they had before, men have argued and fought and killed in an effort to determine the proper functions of government. A hundred years

ago, Karl Marx, the father of communism, advanced his famous solution to that problem. He said that government should take "from each according to his abilities" and give "to each according to his needs." And, as Marx then predicted, every nation in the world has now accepted his principle of government. The only difference between the various nations is in the degree to which the principle is applied.

Almost all of the American people deny, of course, that they — through their government — operate on the theories of Karl Marx. But while they continue to deny it vociferously, they continue to vote to have their agents take the honestly acquired property and income of some people against their wills and give it to other people who have not earned it. In Russia, this process is called communism. In England, it is called socialism. In America, it is called social welfare. In the field of moral law, it is called thievery — taking by force or stealth that which rightfully belongs to another person.

Choice and Consequence

No one will deny that relationships among the peoples of the world are bad. Few will deny that our own country is in serious internal trouble. What is the reason?

Most of us have rejected the concept of an

absolute moral law. Probably this rejection is due more to lack of understanding than to deliberate design. But in either instance, the consequences are the same. In the place of moral law, we have chosen to substitute the force of government as the proper means to deal with the problems of human relationships at home and abroad. The inevitable result of such a choice is visible to anyone who cares to see.

And before we engage in a war to free the people of Russia or of any other country from the compulsions and prohibitions and regimentations of their evil governments, let us reject the equally evil compulsions and prohibitions and regimentations that are developing within our own government here at home, where the state is increasingly assuming control of all of us — children and adults, orphans and non-orphans — under the guise of providing for our welfare. This seems to me an evil thing, because we are shirking our moral duty to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow-men by turning over to Caesar that which properly belongs in the religious and moral areas of personal responsibility.

An Unanswered Question

Those were the disturbing and controversial ideas that I presented to the people who were gathered last September at the orphan-

age that was my boyhood home. I ended my talk by recalling that beautiful June day in 1934 when I had stepped so confidently into a life of my own. I remembered the man who had given me a lift in his car to the city where I was going. I remembered the person who gave me my first job the next day. I thought about the thousands of individuals I had met in various parts of the world — Russians and Germans, Chinese and Japanese, Negroes and whites, Christians and non-Christians, executives and machinists, rich and poor. Individually, I got along well with them. Seldom have I been disappointed in my relationships with individual persons who had no power over me.

I left my audience with this unanswered question: Why is it that when these same peaceful and charitable individuals combine themselves into a group with a "cause," they immediately begin advocating some plan to force their ideas upon me and upon other persons who think differently? Why?

"If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hand of God."

Attributed to George Washington
during the Constitutional Convention

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